

Commentary on the Revelation

- I. Prologue, 1:1-20
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- III. “The Things That Shall be,” 4:1-22:5
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      - a. Judgment on the Great Harlot, 17:1-18
      - b. Judgment on Babylon: Political system, 18:1-24
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*There is among the commentators’ discussion concerning the place of 19:1-5 in John’s thought. Are the verses the climax of the judgment on Babylon and, therefore, are part of chapter 18:20-24, or is it the introduction to a new section, a new topic (the triumph of God). Clearly, the outburst of praise is because of the fall of Babylon. I take it, however, to be part of the great and full declaration of God’s reign with His people, His enemies having been banished.*

What is found here are exclamations of praise and exaltation for the triumph of God, the vindication of the righteousness of God, in the judgment over His enemies by various of the heavenly hosts. It is the grandest of all

“Hallelujah Choruses” ever sung! Hence, there are two “suppers” or “banquets” in this chapter; the celebration of the vindication of the people of God with the people of God and the “feast” of destruction by God with His people upon their enemies.

1) Praise for the defeat of God’s enemies, vv. 1-5

a) The first declaration, vv. 1-2

(1) The statement, v. 1

“After these things” refers to the judgment of the harlot, the fall of ‘Babylon,” human governmental structures opposed to God, described in 18:20-24. The multitudes could be angelic, departed believers, or both; we cannot be sure other than to say that are inhabitants of heaven.

It is rather stunning that the word “hallelujah” in found only here in the NT, the word means “praise God,” occurring four times (vv. 1, 3, 4, 6) in this section. It is found frequently in the Psalms and other instances in Israel’s celebrations (Passover, Tabernacles). An equivalent is found in v. 5b, “Give praise to our God...”

(2) The reason, v. 2

The statement of the righteous judgments of God is explained (“because...and”); God has brought judgment, vengeance, on the great harlot- figure, the Satan-controlled systems of the world, for corrupting the inhabitants of the earth. The OT context of the harlot designation is Jezebel, a behavior found in the church at Thyatira (2:20) and in “Babylon (17:16).”

The second reason is found at the end of v. 2 (“and”). This verse is the answer to the saint’s request for justice in 16:10.

a) The second declaration, v. 3-4

(1) The statement, v. 3

In a sense, this second occurrence of “hallelujah” explains the exclamation of v. 1 further. The “smoke rises from her forever” is found in God’s judgment of Edom (Isa 34:10) that prefigures the judgment here.

(2) The resounding chorus, v. 4

The angels of heaven adoringly worship God who has vindicated His righteousness by judging “Babylon.” “Amen (meaning, “I agree”), Hallelujah” accentuates their praise. From there perspective God’s actions are warranted!

(3) The third declaration, v. 5

The tri-fold praise from heaven seems to function to accentuate the magnificence of the great moment (“great and small”).

2) The gathering of God’s people to the Great Supper of the Lamb, 19:6-10

Verses 1-4 are in a sense a preamble to the gathering of God’s people. The celebration of the judgment on Babylon (18:21-24) leads to the “Great Supper,” a symbol of God’s fellowship with his people. After the judgment on God’s enemies, blessings come upon God’s people.

a) The announcement vv. 6-7

(1) The fact, vv. 6-7a

This seems to be a repetition of v. 1 with the reference to hearing a triumphal voice announcing the great supper of the Lamb. While there is a sense that God reigns in our fallen world, the reference in v. 6 is to the consummation of His reign (“our God...reigns”) in its fullest (this is the meaning of “salvation” in v. 1).

The three-fold designation of God (“Lord,” Jehovah [the covenant- faithful one], “God,” Elohim [the creator and sustained], and “El Shaddai” [the Almighty One]. El Shaddai has

appeared numerous times in the book (1:8; 4:8; 11:7; 15:3; 16:7, 14 [later in 21:22]).

b) The bride, v. 7b-8

(1) The announcement of readiness, v. 7b

The bride, the people of God, has made themselves ready by enduring faithfully through persecutions of numerous kinds, refusing to compromise the content of their faith.

Some have seen human endeavor as being the cause this preparation. However, the verb is passive in voice (“having been made ready,” see 20: 4-6); it is the work of God in us that has caused this to happen; it is not merely rooted in self-endeavor (consequence is not a cause).

(2) The cause of readiness, v.8

The bride is ready because she has been clothed with the deeds of righteousness. The exhortation stated to the churches not to spoil their garments through moral and spiritual compromise (3:4-5), finds its culmination here (a people clothed in fine linen, the symbol of divine righteousness). The image of wedding clothing is interpreted as intimate communion with God in 20:2-3.

(3) The announcement to John, v. 9a.

“Blessed” occurs seven times in the book, this is the fourth occurrence (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). Imagine that! John was an artist. “Seven” is a symbol of completeness, perfection, wholeness; it only bespeaks of God who alone is perfect.

“Invited” is a passive voice verb indicating that the call comes from God alone, the call to salvation.

John is once more commissioned to record what he has seen. The fact of the supper here is a

fulfillment of the invitation to the church at Laodicea (3:20).

(4) The declaration of truth, v. 9b

John is to write because what he has seen is true! The word, “words,” is a symbol (he did not see words) of a message that he saw in visionary form. The statement confirms the legitimacy of the command.

(5) The response of John, v. 10a

John’s response is worship; he is simply overwhelmed as we should be in contemplating our future privileges.

John likely mistook the announcing angel for the Lord. The result is not only instruction, but marvelous insight into the role of angels; they servants as we, but of different natures and circumstance.

(6) The person the prophets spoke of, v. 10b

The point seems to be that angels in heaven and the saints upon the earth, the ancient or more recent people of God, functioned as witnesses to Jesus (“testimony of Jesus” means speaking the claims *about* Jesus in word and lifestyle). Jesus is the person the OT prophets announced, the same message that we proclaim.

“Spirit” is a reference to the Holy Spirit commonly in the book. “Is” implies that the message delivered by the Spirit is equivalent to, the same as, the claims of Jesus. “Prophecy” means, in context, the revelation of the Spirit to the prophets about Jesus, the “prophecy” is the foretelling through the Spirit by the OT prophets.

2. The coming of Christ to the Great Feast of the Lamb,  
19:11-16

What is found here is the most poignant description of the fall of Babylon at the coming of Christ to gather His people and dwell among them. In 17:12-18, John described the defeat of the world system animated by the beast and his minions. That destruction would not be complete without the judgment, the judgment of its destruction.

The re-occurrence of the words “And I saw” divides the section into three parts (vv. 11, 17, 19).

a) The coming of Christ, vv. 11-16

It seems that what is described is the final great battle of all time, Armageddon. Satan will inspire the nations to unite to destroy the people of God only to be disseminated by the rider on the White Horse.

(1) His advent, v. 11

“Then (And) I saw heaven open” indicates the beginning of another vision (4:1, 11:19, 15:5). Here is Christ on a white horse the opposite of the rider that brought the first seal, Satan riding on a black horse. That rider brought destruction as the vicious adversary of God to prevent the creation of a new dwelling of God’s people (he must have thought the destruction of this world would defeat God; actually, God used Satan vicious design to accomplish His vindication in judgment and, by so doing, brought the restored, renovated garden to be forever.

Unlike the first rider, the mimic and deceiver, this one is righteous and true. He comes in righteous judgment to vindicate His justice in condemnation and reward. This one has more crowns (crowns meaning authority and right to rule) than the rider of 6:2, Satan (12:3), and the beast (13:1).

(2) His appearance, vv. 12-13

The description of Christ brings us back to the description of Him in 1:14; the one who appeared before the churches as judge of His people now comes to judge the power behind the chaos in our world. While Satan (12:3) is described as having seven diadems in his proposed, but unauthentic claims, Christ's are numberless; he alone is the real sovereign in this world.

The confidential new name (v. 12b) has led to all kinds of speculation. The names assigned to Christ in the passage are all divine (vv. 11, 13, 16). While we cannot know for sure, that the high priest born the name of God on his forehead is perhaps a clue. Further, we are told in 14:3 that only believers are capable of singing a new song. Could it be that the name implies the experience of redemption? Only believers can recognize it and respond in praise for it. It would seem that the "new name" has to do with the recognition of His person, His fullness of character by His people.

In v. 13, he is revealed as a warrior, His garments bearing the marks of His triumph. "Word of God" seems to imply that He is the truth of God's judgment on sin; He is God's message vindicated.

(3) His entourage, v. 14

Accompanying our Lord is His people; they come with Him to share in His vindication through judgment, and in so doing their own.

(4) His action, v. 15

The words "sharp sword," "strike," "stomps," and "furious wrath" indicate the purpose of His coming. The destruct of His enemies will be like the crushing of grapes.

(5) His identity, v. 16

He alone will reveal Himself as the only potentate; He has no rivals for dominion and power.

3. The coming of Christ to the defeat of His enemies, 19:17-18

a. Stated, v. 17

It seems that the vision (“And I saw”) here is similar to the one in 18:1 with an announcing angel, announcing judgment. The supper of God stands in stark contrast to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!

The invitation to the “birds” indicates a horrific battle scene, most likely the same one described in 16:12-16, Armageddon. In this chapter the calling of carnivorous predators to a feast of God’s making happens before the millennium and concerns the two beasts of Rev. 13 whereas in chapter 20 it is after the millennium and concerns the judgment on Satan.

b. Reasoned, v. 18

The point of this terrible image is the inescapable judgment of God’s enemies.

4. The judgment of the king’s enemies, vv. 19-21

The image (“And I saw”) of a second sumptuous banquet of feasting occurs here, but it is not with God’s bride alone; it is a “feasting” of God and His people in the consumption of His enemies.

a. The defeat, vv. 19-20

The phrasing of v. 19 is very close to the “gathering” described in 16:14 and 20:8, the harbinger of the last great battle. The great final battle, Armageddon has arrived (see 16:13-16). The power animating the kings of the earth, the worldly anti-God system, the beast and false prophet, are judged. It is amazing that we have no description here of the final battle itself.

b. The destiny, v. 21



The “sword” judges and decrees the end of God’s enemies; it is the truthfulness of His message (the “sword” being symbolic of His words coming from His mouth).

### Applications

1. The “salvation” announced by the loud voice (v. 1) from heaven concerns the final and ultimate redemption of God’s people, the ushering of them in to the very presence of God forever. It marks the end of the trials and sufferings of God’s people in a world where Satan had held limited, but often tragic, sway using people for his cruel purposes. It demarcates the beginning of the unmitigated presence of God enjoying His presence without diminution, limitation, or interruption. It is then that disappointment and pain, sorrow and tears will have ended. Are you looking for to that great day? How are you ordering your life now in anticipation of what that life will be like?
2. There are two great banquets in our passage: one that is full of joy and feasting in celebration and the other is a tragic one in which the attendees will be feasted upon. In the one God will join with His people in union with His Son; in the other there is a call to birds to feast of the bodies of those who have reject His son. Both images, a wedding feast and a battle scene, are symbolic. One bespeaks of joy and delight of all parties involved, the other of a crushing blow for the other party. Here is a wonderful picture coupled with a horrifying reality. Both tell us something of almighty God. Someday there will be no question of His tenderness, kindness, gentleness, and mercy and at the same time there will be no question that He is a God of justice and righteousness who must judge sin because it is contrary to His character. Which vindication of God, which feast, do you plan to attend?
3. If this passage teaches us anything, it should instruct us what will not always be what is and what will be will be unlike what is. It should teach us the impermanence of the world that surrounds us; it should teach us that this is our “wilderness sojourn” having been deliverance by blood and miracle that only was shadowed in a minor way by the scattering of blood on door posts and lintels followed by the opening of a sea to allow safety of passage and protection from

pursuit when it shout. People who believe that this is the only paradise will come to experience no “paradise” and those who recognize the world for what it is will be given the gift of a far better one. Do you see this world as your real home or are you, like Abram of old, looking for a city whose builder and maker is God?

4. God’s view of this world is that, as a system, it has been given over to what is contrary to God. The fall of Adam not only brought a corrupt of his race but of his habitation. This is a broken world, a world that abandoned the right way centuries, even millennia, ago. It is a world corrupted by the Great Harlot, not a woman that is mischievous and irresponsible, but a world symbolized by that image a world enamored with the goddess of pleasure for pleasure’s sake, of materialism believing that the key to security and happiness is financial. Do you find yourself trapped in that kind of a world though God has opened your eyes to a vastly different world? Are you seeking to live in the wrong world? One thing is sure, you cannot live in both simultaneously forever.
5. Can you fathom that someday you will be clothed in the “wedding garments” of purity and righteousness? Can you imagine that you one day will have intimacy with God that only the rarest of moments afford us in this life, and then without duration or constancy? Can you think of what it will be like to be the honored guest as the greatest of gatherings? However, that is exactly what will take place when the king exercises His judgments of the wicked and celebrates with His children His triumph. How do you think that future prospect should shape our lives today? How does living in anticipation inform how we are to live today? Does it have any relevance on our manner of living?
6. The severity of God is really as amazing as His grace and mercy. The description of His wrath only makes sense in coming to grips with the fact God is perfect, complete in all His characteristics. He is perfect wisdom, knowledge, and so forth. Further, because His justice has been satisfied through Jesus, He can act rightly in loving kindness and grace. However, because unbelievers disregard, disrespect, and revile any thought of God’s true character His righteousness demands that He act in wrath because He is incapable of tolerating it, but must condemn and punish. The image of stomping on grapes in the winepress of His wrath is graphic. Our

response should be at least two-fold: first, to stand in wonder that God has granted us reprieve from it, and second, to do what we can to help people avoid it. What are you consciously doing to help people avoid it?

7. The character and attributes of God revealed in our passage are worthy of our meditation, our reflection. In v. 1 He is described as faithful and true; God is the promise-keeper and unquestionably authentic when it comes to what He speaks. Can you say that to some reflective degree that you reflect His image in that regard? Further, He is described as “King of Kings and Lord of Lord.” There is not competitor for His sovereign rule over kings and nations. He is Lord. Is that true in your life as well? Does it seem strange that the most difficult people for Him to govern are those who claim to be His people? In what ways are you making it urgent for God to deal with you?